



FARMINGTON VALLEY TRAILS COUNCIL

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March 7, 2022

**Testimony of Barbara J. Collins
President, Farmington Valley Trails Council
Raised House Bill 5291, An Act Authorizing Bonding for
Bikeways, Greenways and Recreational Trails.**

Barbara Collins
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Dear Co-Chairs Cohen and Gresko, Vice-Chairs Slap and Palm, Ranking Members Miner and Harding, and members of the Environment Committee:

The Farmington Valley Trails Council (FVTC) strongly supports HB 5291.

FVTC was created over 25 years ago to advocate for the creation of multi-use trails to provide a place for cyclists and walkers protected from automobiles. That effort resulted in the creation of the Farmington Canal Heritage Trail (FCHT) and the Farmington River Trail. The FCHT was designed with the intent to follow the former canal from New Haven to Northampton, Massachusetts. Much of the trail in Massachusetts is complete. In Connecticut, we have remaining gaps in New Haven, Southington and Plainville. In addition, FVTC is also working to support creation of connector trails to surrounding towns such as Bloomfield and Hartford that will allow better access from urban areas to the FCHT. The connector from Tariffville to the trail in Bloomfield has begun but, as with all our gaps, needs funding.

HB 5291 could help reach these goals by increasing the bond authorization for the Connecticut Recreational Trails and Greenways Grants Program to \$6 million. As I am sure you are aware, there is so much demand for this funding that the last go around there were 65 applications for funding and of those approved there was still a shortfall of funding of over \$7 million dollars in highly ranked projects.

The FVTC is a non-profit with no paid staff. We attempt to raise money to assist the towns in our area to build and maintain the trails but even with our best efforts more money is needed. I can attest that during the pandemic the use of our trails increased dramatically showcasing the love and need of the citizens of Connecticut for open space where they can walk, run and ride safely. I know that Connecticut is unique because we are the only state that has its own Recreational Trails Program modeled on the federal funds. Those matching grants are used for planning, design, construction, and maintenance of recreational trails, as well as educational programs. They are invaluable for keeping our well-used trail system maintained and growing.

Please vote to support this bill.

Sincerely,

Barbara Collins
President